



# Wings Of A Dove

Words and Music by  
BOB FERGUSON

Moderately Bright

Verse (Tacet)

1. When trou- bles sur -  
2. (When No - ah had)  
3. (When Je - sus went)

*mf*

*E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>* *Fm*

round us, When e - vils come, The bod - y grows  
drift - ed On the flood man - y days, He searched for  
down To the wa - ters that day, He was bap -

*B<sup>b</sup>7* *E<sup>b</sup>* (Tacet)

weak; The spir - it grows numb, When these things be -  
land In - var - i - ous ways, Trou - bles he  
tized In the us - u - al way, When it was

*E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>*

set us, He does - n't for - get us, He  
had some But was - n't for - got - ten, He  
done, God blessed His Son, He

30-2297

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*R Ferguson*

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*E<sup>b</sup>* *B<sup>b</sup>* *E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>* *E<sup>b</sup>* (Tacet)

sends down His love On the wings of a dove.  
sent him His love On the wings of a dove.  
sent Him His love On the wings of a dove.

*mp*

Chorus

(Tacet)

*E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>*

On the wings of a snow white dove He sends His pure

*mp*

*E<sup>b</sup>* *B<sup>b</sup>7*

sweet love, A sign from a - bove On the wings of a

1. 2. *E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>* *E<sup>b</sup>* (Tacet) 3. *E<sup>b</sup>* *A<sup>b</sup>* *E<sup>b</sup>*

dove. 2. When No - ah had dove.  
3. When Je - sus went

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# Chief Martin: E

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By CHIEF PHILLIP MARTIN

■ See obituary, page 1.

July 23, 2001

I am saddened to report the death of Robert Bruce "Bob" Ferguson, Sr., who passed away on Sunday, July 22, 2001, at the University Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, following an extended illness and hospital stay. Bob was 73 years of age. Indeed a brilliant and wise man is gone. Bob Ferguson is survived by his wife Martha Jean Lewis Ferguson, two sons Robert Bruce "Rob" Ferguson, Jr., of Hope, MS, and John Marshall Ferguson of Philadelphia, MS; two daughters, Mary Lorena Ferguson Lewis of Philadelphia, MS, and Missouri Ann Ferguson Brown of Hugo, Oklahoma, and six grandchildren. Other survivors include two brothers, A. Claude Ferguson of Bedford, Indiana, and Paul Eugene Ferguson of Amarillo, Texas. Bob's parents and one brother, John Carl Ferguson, Jr., preceded him in death.

Milling Funeral Home of Union, MS, is in charge of arrangements. Bob's funeral services will be conducted on Wednesday morning, July 25th, at 10:00 o'clock at Pearl River Baptist Church just off Highway 16 West in the Pearl River community. Funeral visitation will begin on Monday morning, July 23, 2001, at 9:00 a.m. in the home of Lorena Lewis, at 153 Goat Ranch Road, also in Pearl River. Flowers may be sent to Ms. Lewis' home.

We are grieved to have lost a dear old friend. Bob first became acquainted with the Tribe and many Choctaw people in 1957. At that time, he was employed as an Ecology Movie Producer in Nashville, Tennessee, with the Tennessee Game and Fish Commission, a position he held from 1956 until 1961. "The World Outdoors" was the first film series that Bob produced, and it is still circulated today by the Commission. Bob attended meetings in Memphis, representing the Commission, during which he was responsible for the oversight of the Chucalissa Indian archaeology site. He was also working on a film called "The Big E," a pioneering ecology education film. During this period, Bob met many Choctaw people who were working on the project, as well as some Tribal

served as Preparator and Public Relations Director at the Chucalissa Indian Museum in Memphis. Also during this same period, Bob was the CEO of Robert B. Ferguson Music and Backwoods Music, focusing on entrepreneurial development of companies founded in 1954. Work going on during this time was the printing and distribution of sheet music, song publishing, and independent film production.

Later, from 1963 through 1978, Bob worked as a Senior Record Producer with RCA Victor Records in Nashville, where his work was directly supervised by Chet Atkins. A talented musician and lyricist, Bob wrote both the lyrics and music for two very popular songs, "Wings of a Dove" in 1959 and "Carroll County Accident" in 1968. The Country Music Association named "Carroll County Accident" as Best Country Song of the Year in 1969. The Broadcast Music Corporation awarded Bob recognition in 1960 for "Wings of a Dove" being the most outstanding and best-selling song. That song was his first multi-million seller, and it has been recorded by many artists and in many languages around the world. In 1987, "Wings of a Dove" received BMI's "One Million Airplays" award. Radio stations throughout the country are still playing the popular song today. Bob's other songs included "Taos," "Natividad," and "Choctaw Saturday Night." During his fifteen-year tenure with RCA Records in Nashville, Bob produced records for Lester Flatt, Porter Wagoner, Chet Atkins, Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass, Floyd Cramer, Dolly Parton, Charley Pride, George Hamilton IV, Homer & Jethro, Connie Smith, Paulito Ortega, Pee Wee Spittler, Norma Jean, Dottie West, John D. Loudermilk, and some 50 other recording artists.

Bob Ferguson was the third child born to a family of Scots and raised in the small Missouri Ozarks town called Willow Springs. His parents were John Carl and Mary Willie Boles Ferguson. Bob's birth date was December 30, 1927. He received a Bachelor's degree in Radio and Television Production.



# Ferguson

Continued from page 1

Ferguson died at University Medical Center in Jackson, said hospital spokeswoman Leslie Myers.

The death certificate listed cancer as the cause, said Melinda Cater of Milling Funeral Home in Union, which is handling the funeral.

Ferguson, a native of Willow Springs, Mo., attended Southwest Missouri State University and Washington State University. He was hired in 1955 to produce films for the Tennessee Game & Fish Commission. He worked there until 1960, when he wrote and produced the No. 1 hit "Wings of a Dove" for Ferlin Husky.

"I had the tune ticking over in my head for quite a while, and one day I thought of the words for it," Ferguson said about "Wings of a Dove" in a 1964 interview with The Tennessean newspaper. "I sang it for Ferlin and he decided to record it."

As a staff producer at RCA Records in the 1960s and early '70s, Ferguson worked with artists like Parton, Connie Smith, Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass, Jim Ed Brown, George Hamilton IV and Archie Campbell.

He wrote "The Carroll County Accident," a No. 2 hit for Wagoner. It was named the best country song of 1969 by the Country Music Association.

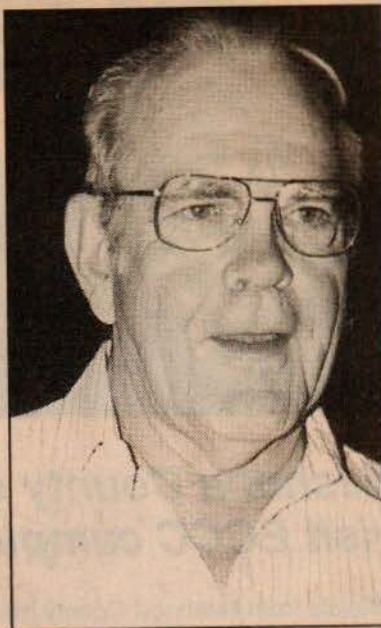
Ferguson, who once worked part time as promotional director of the Chucalissa Prehistoric Indian Village in Memphis and served as editor of the Choctaw Times, spent the last years of his life living on the Choctaw reservation near Philadelphia with his family.

He is survived by his wife Martha; two sons, Robert Bruce Ferguson and John Ferguson; and two daughters, Mary Lewis and Missouri Brown.

His parents were John Carl and Mary Willie Boles Ferguson.

He received a bachelor's degree in radio and television production, speech department, from Washington State University in 1954. He received a master's degree in anthropology at Vanderbilt University, before seeing active duty as a part of the 21st Field Artillery in World War II.

He worked as a senior record producer with RCA-Victor Records in Nashville and wrote the lyrics and



Bob Ferguson

■ Chief Phillip Martin's comments page 12.

music for "Wings of A Dove" in 1959 and "Carroll County Accident" in 1968.

Although the latter was named Best Country Song of the Year in 1969, "Wings of A Dove" received BMI's "One Million Airplays" award in 1987. During his tenure in Nashville, Ferguson produced records for such stars as Porter Wagoner, Chet Atkins, Dottie West and Dolly Parton, among others.

He was employed with the Tribe in January 1978 and remained a fixture in the Tribal office — performing such services as public information and ensuring public awareness of the Tribe's governmental system — until his "retirement" in 1998.

Ferguson designed the popular World Series of Stickball tournament that is a part of the Choctaw Indian Fair each year and became the "Voice of the Warriors," the public address announcer for Choctaw Central High School's football team.

He was appointed Tribal historian by the Tribal Council and was also a member of MENSA, a society for individuals with high IQs.

Ferguson's wife Martha is a native Neshoba Countian from the Pearl River community.

## Tribe's Bob Ferguson dead at 73

■ He was country music producer and songwriter

Bob Ferguson, who wrote the standard "Wings of a Dove" and produced records for Dolly Parton, Porter Wagoner and other country music stars, died Sunday in Jackson. He was 73.

Services were scheduled this morning at the Pearl River Baptist Church, the Rev. Calvin Gibson and the Rev. Calvin Isaac officiating. Burial was to follow in Phillips Cemetery.

Locally, the deep baritone was known as the voice of the Choctaw Central Warriors over their public address system.

Ferguson served the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in many capacities, among them, Tribal historian emeritus. He is credited with founding Choctaw Video Productions.

"We are grieved to have lost a dear old friend," said Chief Phillip Martin, in a statement. "Bob Ferguson was a brilliant and wise man, a Choctaw at heart, a faithful and loyal friend, a husband, a father, and a grandfather who has left his definite mark on the world. We will all miss Bob very much. His familiar voice is now still, yet it echoes in our minds and will always help us to recall fond memories of the man whom we were privileged to know."

See FERGUSON, page 16



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# Bob Ferg

Washington, in 1954. Later Bob earned his Master's degree in anthropology at Vanderbilt University, Nashville. During World War II, Bob saw active duty with the U.S. military, serving in the 21st Field Artillery, 105 mm Howitzer Battalion, Third and Fifth Divisions, and "Task Force Frigid" in Alaska. During the Korean Conflict, Bob served in the U.S. Marine Corps as Drill Instructor, Headquarters Third Division, DUKW outfit and Special Services.

Bob was truly a good friend and family member of the Tribe for many, many years. One part about Bob that made him really stand out in one's mind was his easy ability as a non-Indian to join the Choctaw community, make himself right at home, and show his understanding of the background and history of the Tribe in meaningful and important ways that were helpful. He was just a good, plain guy who had a certain magic about him that made people like him. Bob worked hard and confidently in promoting Choctaw Self-Determination and in helping to bring about positive changes that improved the social attitudes and approach to life among his family, friends, and co-workers. Bob was a friendly and humorous man who never intentionally offended anyone. He had a strong personality, and found making friends to be easy. If Bob could have been Choctaw, he would have. Bob was an extraordinarily intelligent man, and he was gifted with the talent of being adaptable and at ease with himself. This characteristic made Bob likeable and approachable to many people. He was well known and highly respected for his work not only locally, but throughout the state of Mississippi and beyond.

When he first became acquainted with the Choctaws of Mississippi, Bob knew that he had found people that he liked. It was not long before he met a young Choctaw lady named Martha Lewis, who first captured Bob's attention, and soon thereafter his heart. They married and settled in the Pearl River community. Here he spent the remainder of his career with the people whom he loved and going about the work that he so much enjoyed as Tribal Historian, Museum Director, and public relations specialist. Bob often said that his marriage to his Choctaw wife, Martha, and the birth of their four children were his finest and greatest accomplishments in life. Bob raised his four children right; he grounded them early in strong family values and moral principles, by which he abided. Bob always had a strong admiration and genuine respect for the Tribe itself, the Choctaw people, and the Choctaw culture. He was a serious-minded student of Choctaw language, and he encouraged those around him to gain an appreciation

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and understanding of the Tribe and its history, as well. Bob was a strong supporter of the Tribal government, the Tribal Council, and the Chief.

Bob was first employed on a regular, full-time basis with the Tribe on January 3, 1978. Subsequently, he devoted the next 20 years of his life to regular, full-time service to the Tribe until his retirement in 1998. Bob's contributions to the Tribe were varied and numerous. One outstanding achievement that immediately comes to mind was Bob's help in reviving the ancient Choctaw game of stickball, sometimes called "The Little Brother of War." Stickball, which is America's oldest field sport, had been played by many, many generations of Choctaws, but when Bob arrived on the Reservation, the sport had all but died out. He joined with several Tribal elders, including Baxter York, John Levi Bell, Laymon Shumake, and Henry Williams, among others, who shared Bob's interest in reviving the game. Bob led in the reorganization of stickball teams, and the idea caught on very quickly. Bob understood the historical value of keeping the game alive. Soon every Choctaw community began assembling stickball teams; Bob would attend games and serve as the announcer, as he also did at football games at Choctaw Central High School. His voice became familiar to all, and he was soon nicknamed "Voice of the Warriors" by the Football Team. Bob was the individual who originally bore this nickname. With the growing interest and popularity of stickball, Bob proceeded to design the World Series Stickball Tournament. So, Bob Ferguson is largely responsible for the revival of this historical Choctaw sporting event that today highlights our annual Choctaw Indian Fair each July. Today all Tribal communities have stickball teams, everyone is actively involved in the competition and camaraderie that accompany the games, and it was Bob's knowledge of the historical background of the sport, together with his willingness to cooperate with the Tribal elders who wanted to start it up again, that made this important revival possible.

During his twenty years' duty with the Tribe, Bob was responsible for producing a multitude of audio and video materials necessary for the promotion and public awareness of the Tribe's government, educational system, healthcare operations, economic development, and history and culture. For many years, Bob was also responsible for Tribal public relations with the media, and he worked to develop the Tribe's archives, museum, and historical publications. He founded Choctaw Video Productions, an operation that is still running strong today. Other responsibilities included Bob's service as Tribal Historian by



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appointment of the Tribal Council and curator for the Choctaw Museum of the Southern Indian. Always actively involved in the annual Fair, Bob served on the Choctaw Indian Fair Committee for many years.

Bob often put his pen to paper, and produced some outstanding and scholarly publications that illuminate the history, culture, and evolution of some of America's Indian tribes residing in the southeastern part of the country, including the Choctaw. Bob wrote a booklet called "The Middle Cumberland Culture" in 1972, that Vanderbilt Press published. That same year, Bob also wrote "So You Want To Be In Music!" with Jesse Burt, published by Abingdon Press of Nashville. The following year, in 1973, Bob, in collaboration with Dr. Jesse Burt, wrote the book *Indians of the Southeast: Then and Now*, which was published by Abingdon Press. Two years later, in 1975, Bob wrote a chapter called "An Overview of Southeastern Indian Culture" in the book *Indians of the Lower South*, published by University of Florida Press. 1985 saw Bob's production of yet another chapter called "Treaties between the United States and the Choctaw Nation" that was included in the book *The Choctaw before Removal*, published by the University Press of Mississippi. In addition, Bob also held to his credit numerous scholarly articles and monographs pertaining to Choctaw Indian history, archaeology, and wildlife conservation. He wrote, produced, co-produced, and served as the cinematographer for many motion pictures focusing on Indian crafts, wildlife conservation, ecology, and the Tennessee State Park system.

While on board at the Choctaw Museum of the Southern Indian, Bob produced a number of informative and educational videos focusing on today's Choctaws, including *Choctaw Story*, *Choctaw Quest*, *Strength in Unity*, and *Oriented to Success*. These and other videos produced either directly by Bob Ferguson or with his assistance have been excellent and very valuable resources that the Tribe has repeatedly used over the years to promote Choctaw Self-Determination, to educate the general public

about the Tribe and its multi-faceted work, and to capture the attention of prospective business partners with whom the Tribe has successfully collaborated over the past thirty years.

Bob served as a lecturer at Mississippi State University, at Vanderbilt University, and on the Choctaw Indian Reservation on topics including Choctaw culture and history, resource use and conservation, Choctaw culture through language, and Tribal archaeological issues. Bob was like a walking encyclopedia, extraordinarily knowledgeable in a great variety of academic disciplines, American Indian history, linguistics, and perhaps most importantly, human nature. Other professional distinctions that Bob received over the years included The Iron Eyes Cody Peace Medal in 1986; honorary membership on the Board of Directors for United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) in 1982; and appointment as Tribal Historian by the Tribal Council of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in 1980. At the time of his death, Bob was still serving as Tribal Historian Emeritus. All of these achievements were in addition to Bob's membership in MENSAs, the high IQ society.

Besides being a trusted and loyal friend of long standing, Bob was a talented and invaluable resource, called upon again and again by the Tribe, even following his 1998 retirement. Bob was always ready and eager to accommodate any request made of him, as long as it was in the best interest of the Tribe and the Choctaw people's welfare. In that regard, he had a faith that was unflagging and an energy that was unstoppable.

Bob Ferguson was a brilliant and wise man, a Choctaw at heart, a faithful and loyal friend, a husband, a father, and a grandfather who has left his definitive mark on the world. We will all miss Bob very much. His familiar voice is now still; yet it echoes in our minds and will always help us to recall fond memories of the man whom we were privileged to know.

*Philip Martin is chief of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.*